

Anything less than a reversal of the consolidation and centralized corporate control of the past twenty years is criminal, period. The public airwaves are being prostituted to the worst of capitalism's natures for shit on a shingle in return. The Quid Pro Quo, Jack GE off for money then shit in the journalists mouth so he can pass it on to the people governing principle has done enough damage, keep corporations out of controlling information thank you.

The fundamental unreliability of America's media

By Glenn Greenwald

Consider the record of the American media over the last two weeks alone. Justin Elliott of TPM documents how an absolute falsehood about the attempted Christmas Day airline bombing -- that Abdulmutallab purchased a "one-way ticket" to the U.S., when it was actually a round-trip ticket -- has been repeated far and wide by U.S. media outlets as fact. Two weeks ago, Elliott similarly documented how an equally false claim from ABC News -- that two of the Al Qaeda leaders behind that airliner attack had been released from Guantanamo -- became entrenched as fact in media reports (at most, it was one, not two). This week, Dan Froomkin chronicles how completely discredited claims about Guantanamo recidivism rates continue to be uncritically "reported" by The New York Times and then inserted into our debates as fact.

As I documented two weeks ago, government claims about which "top Al Qaeda fighters" were killed by our airstrikes turn out to be untrue far more often than not, yet are always mindlessly featured by our media, ensuring little questioning of those actions; and now, at least two of the three Top Terrorists claimed to have been killed by our recent airstrikes in Yemen -- and possibly all three -- are quite likely alive. As Greg Sargent writes, one of the most provocative and inflammatory claims of the trashy Halperin/Heilmann gossip book -- that Bill Clinton told Ted Kennedy that Obama would have been "getting us coffee" just a couple years earlier -- is not only completely unsourced (like virtually every one of their sleazy claims), but also "paraphrased."

Aside from falsity -- and the fact that they become irreversibly lodged in our political culture as fact -- what do all of these deceitful reports have in common? They're all the by-product of granting anonymity to people and then repeating what they claim as fact, with the falsehood-disseminators protected by "journalists" from any and all accountability for their falsehoods. It's exactly the same process that caused our leading media outlets to tell Americans about Iraq's massive WMD program and Al Qaeda connections; Jessica Lynch's heroic firefight with inhumane Iraqi devils and her "rescue" by our Marines; Pat Tillman's death at the hands of Al Qaeda monsters; and government tests that "confirmed" the presence of bentonite in the anthrax used to attack the U.S., which meant it was likely that Saddam was behind the attacks.

Unjustified anonymity -- especially when mindlessly repeating what shielded government sources claim in secret -- is the single greatest enabler of false and deceitful "reporting." Despite (or, really, because of) its unparalleled record of producing lies, it will never stop, because agreeing to it is how "journalists" end up being selected as favored message-carrying servants for the powerful. This falsehood-producing method isn't ancillary to American journalism but central to it; the book which is occupying the attention of America's political and media class is based exclusively on unattributed, shielded sources, and that seems to bother none of them.

None of the falsehoods documented here will ever lead to any accountability, because the identity of the falsehood-producers will be shielded by their loyal journalist-servants, and the journalists themselves will simply claim that they wrote what they did because their hidden sources told them to. That's not only the effect, but the intent, of the central method of American journalism: to disseminate outright falsehoods to the American public and ensure that neither the liars nor their loyal message-carriers ever face any consequences or even reputational loss. Anonymity is so common that "reporters" barely even bother any longer to explain why it's justified, notwithstanding numerous policies of media outlets requiring exactly that explanation. As the use of anonymity has escalated rapidly, so, too, has the pervasiveness of outright falsehoods and the inherent unreliability of much of what the American media "reports." Lying is so much easier -- and thus so much more ! common -- when you get to do it while remaining hidden.

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Two other media points:

(1) I've been writing frequently of late about the perception disparities between Americans and the Muslim world due not to their propaganda-based ignorance but to our own. Here's a somewhat old but highly illustrative example: in 1996, then-Secretary-of-State Madeleine Albright was asked by 60 Minutes about the fact that American sanctions on Iraq resulted in the deaths of "a half million children" -- more than the number killed at Hiroshima -- and Albright dismissively replied: "We think the price is worth it." At the time, FAIR documented that while the number of dead Iraqi children -- as well as Albright's quote -- was known far and wide in predominantly Muslim countries, it was almost completely blacked-out in the American press. How many Americans know that our sanctions resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children?

(2) Last night, Brian Williams began his NBC News broadcast by expressing extreme and righteous anger over a truly momentous scandal: Mark McGwire's steroid use, telling his audience: "Because this is a family broadcast, we probably can't say what we'd like to about the news today." Wow, scathing. If Williams has expressed even a small inkling of an objection -- let alone righteous outrage

-- over things like torture, lies that led to the Iraq War, chronic surveillance lawbreaking and the like, I'd be quite surprised. Walter Cronkite famously and unusually abandoned precepts of journalistic "objectivity" in order to stand up to the U.S. Government's lies over the Vietnam War; Brian Williams - who was embedded in the Iraq War and was a reverent commentator regarding everyone involved - does so in order to stand up to a detested, powerless baseball player. In that contrast one finds a nice illustration of what our modern press corps is.